

One

Monday of Holy Week

On Monday morning of Holy Week, Jesus returned from Bethany, and as he passed by Bethphage, “Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it and found nothing on it but leaves. And he said to it, 'May you never bear fruit again'; and at that instant the fig tree withered and died.”

The fig tree is the prophetic sign that helps us understand what Jesus is doing on Monday of Holy Week. We know that Jesus spent Palm Sunday evening in Bethany at the Home of his friends Martha, Mary and Lazarus. And what do you suppose Martha did for Jesus? Why, she made a big feast of course! So, when Jesus curses the fig tree for not bearing fruit, it's not because he's dying of hunger. The problem is that the fig tree is not doing what it was supposed to. Oh, it was busy alright, busy making leaves. But it wasn't bearing fruit.

That's the problem, the Jewish people were not bearing the fruit that God asked.

Two

Tax Collectors and Prostitutes

Recall that Jesus drove the Jews out of the Temple yesterday.

Then Jesus went back into the Temple Monday morning and began to teach. Immediately the chief priests accost him saying, “What authority have you for acting like this?” Jesus replied, “I will answer your question if you answer mine. John's baptism, was it from God or from men?”

And they argued it out this way among themselves, "If we say from heaven, he will retort, "Then why did you refuse to believe him?"; but if we say from man, we have the people to fear, for they all hold that John was a prophet'. So, their reply to Jesus was, "We do not know."

Then Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, the tax collectors and prostitutes are going into the Kingdom and you are not because they heard John and they chose to repent and bear the fruit of repentance but you refuse."

What does it mean to bear the fruit of repentance? It means to repent, to stop doing the sinful things we do, get rid of the temptations that cause us to sin, make time daily for friendship with Jesus in prayer, practice the virtues, and live a life of love.

Are we bearing the fruits of repentance?

Three

Then Jesus told them a Parable

There was a man, a landowner, who planted a vineyard. He fenced it round, dug a winepress in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went abroad.

The Householder is God. The vineyard is the land of Israel. The tenants are the Jewish people. When the season of fruit drew near he sent his servants to the tenants to collect the fruit. There is that dang fruit again. God is always insisting on collecting His fruit.

But the tenants seized his servants, thrashed one, killed another, and stoned a third... Finally, he sent his son to them. "They will respect my son," he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other,

"This is the heir. Come on, let us kill him and take over his inheritance." So they seized him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

This is what they will do to Jesus, the Son of the Father on Friday, they will take him out of the city and kill him. Then Jesus asks them, "Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They answered, "He should kill them and give their nation to someone else *who will produce the fruit...*"

Four

The Stone Rejected by the Builders

The whole issue on Monday of Holy Week is that John came looking for the fruit of repentance and the Jewish people rejected John. Then Jesus comes looking for the same fruit and they reject Him. He is the stone rejected by the builders.

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the foundation stone."

Jesus is the stone that is rejected, that becomes the cornerstone of a new kingdom. Jesus is referring to a prophecy from Daniel chapter 2 in which Daniel sees a vision of four kingdoms, the Babylonians, the Persians, Greeks, and Romans. At the time of the Romans, a small stone cut by no human hand comes and strikes the fourth kingdom, shattering it. And that small stone becomes a great mountain filling the whole earth. That stone is Jesus who founds the Catholic Church at the time of the Romans and the Catholic Church becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth.

"I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."

At this moment Jesus transfers the Kingdom of God from Israel to the Catholic Church.

Now here is the question: Are we Catholics and Christians producing the fruits? Am I personally?

Five

The most effective way to bear fruit the fruit Jesus is looking for is to do three things.

First **read or listen to** something from the Word of God. Then, **reflect or think** about what struck you. Apply it to your life by asking, “Am I living this or not? If not, what is *preventing me*? Pride, vanity, envy, sloth, anger, greed, gluttony, lust, etc. Practically, what am I going to do about it?”

This leads us to form a resolution, a gameplan for the day. That’s the third step, **resolution – the fruit!**

Choose something practical and concrete to do that day based on your meditation. The resolution is the key. If we practice a resolution flowing from our meditation every day we will change and become a better person. If we don’t practice a resolution, then not only will we not remain the same, we will get worse – because unchecked vice makes a person worse, not better.

If you do these three things every day, then you will bear the fruit that bears repentance.